

Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES Regional Crisis Team
Recipient of the American Red Cross of Westchester Community Impact Award – May 2009

Important Guidelines for School Memorials

Why are memorials recommended in schools?

- Memorials promote healthy healing for students and staff.
- Memorials provide a necessary opportunity to express emotions in a variety of ways.
- Memorials coordinated by schools ensure appropriate, safe and constructive expressions of grief through supervised structured activities in a timely manner.

What are appropriate forms of school memorials?

- Recommended temporary memorial sites include student lockers, bulletin boards, murals, and classrooms, and should be designated with care.
 - Use of common area spaces such as main entrance, cafeteria, and gymnasium may create discomfort for some members of the school community and are not preferable.
- Recommended student activities include writing letters, journals, poems and stories and creating art work and music for personal expression or communication with bereaved family and friends.

What is the appropriate time frame for school memorials?

- Prior to the onset of the memorial, it is essential that the school-based crisis team predetermine a time frame. This ensures that the normal routine will be reestablished as soon as possible.

What are some cautionary considerations when planning a school memorial?

- It is advised that permanent memorials be created by the community rather than the school.
- Avoid creating permanent memorials that cannot be repeated for future deaths.
- When a memorial service is desired, consider utilizing community resources rather than a school setting.

What are the special considerations following a suicide?

- A death by suicide should be addressed by the school community **consistent with those efforts after any other form of death**. However, school memorials are not recommended because they may promote a contagion effect (copycat behavior).
- Suicide prevention **and postvention information is recommended** for the entire school community including all students, parents/guardians and staff.

Who can you contact for more information?

- The PNW BOCES Regional Crisis Team (Dr. Lynn Allen at 914-248-2310)
- The clinical staff at your school.

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